

Avoiding Slips and Falls

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Falls happen quickly and unexpectedly. Safety experts estimate that one in three Americans over the age of 65 fall each year—and that risk increases with age. Many of these falls lead to serious injury and even death. In fact, falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries among senior adults.

Winter brings an increased risk of falls with high winds, icy conditions, slippery surfaces and snow covered stairs, porches, sidewalks and driveways.

To protect yourself against falls, wear lightweight shoes that are well insulated and waterproof. Make sure they have a thick, non-slip tread sole and a wide, low heel.

Be extremely careful when walking on ice. If using a cane or walker during wet, icy weather, consider the following:

- Replace the rubber tips on your cane or walker before they are worn smooth. They can become very slippery, especially when wet.
- Purchase an ice pick that fits into the end of your cane. The sharp tip will give you extra grip on winter days and will fold up when you're not using it. These are available at most home health care stores.
- Have someone assist you if you must walk outside when surfaces are slippery, wet or icy.

Carry a cell phone or whistle with you. If you fall, you will be able to telephone for help or use the whistle to get someone's attention.

Be accountable to someone. Have a neighbor, friend or family member check on you daily. Make sure someone knows where you are, especially if you are going out, and when you will be back. That way they can watch for your return and follow up if you don't come back when expected.

Connect with other senior adults on a regular basis to ensure their safety and well being.

For more information on avoiding slips and falls, contact the Springfield-Greene County Health Department at (417) 864-1658 or online at <http://health.springfieldmogov.org>.